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ORD # 4909-74

November 5, 1974

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With the recent world-wide publicity of the so-called paranormal research at SRI (see enclosed), several of us in the Life Sciences Division have felt it appropriate to develop a facility under our operation and control whose primary function would be to attempt to replicate research reported anywhere in the world in this generally nebulous and poorly controlled area of research.

Internally, we have been as critical (if not more so) as Nature and The New Scientist of the quality of the paranormal research that has been in progress at SRI. Almost all of the research reported in this area is conducted by "believers" and they tend to consider those who are more neutral, but open, as inimical to and prejudiced against the demonstration of paranormal phenomena. For example, we were permitted to run one experiment with Geller (see blocked portion on page 180 of The New Scientist article) which had the appropriate controls and which Geller failed on each of three different occasions. Targ interpreted this failure as illustrating that Geller's powers can be thwarted by experimenters who "disbelieve" in his powers (personal communication). This, of course, is an empirical question and could easily be subject to test. For example, using the appropriate suite of adjacent rooms, one of the rooms could be packed with believers, disbelievers, or neutral subjects on different days (scheduled at random) and the performance of the paranormal subject (in an adjacent room) could be monitored. The procedure would be kept blind from the subject and, preferably, from the principal investigators as well.

Such phenomena, if they can be reliably demonstrated, can, most probably, be explained by natural psychophysiological laws. The assumption that they are "paranormal" is more a confession of our ignorance of human abilities at this stage of our knowledge than anything else.

At any rate, I suggest that a neutral group, such as our own, should be available to attempt to replicate the reported phenomena (e.g., the dream transport phenomena reported from the Maimonides Laboratory; some of Rhine's studies; the SRI studies by Targ and Puthoff, etc.). My

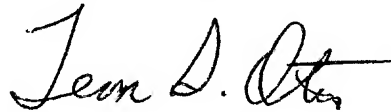
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question to you is, would the agency be interested in supporting such a group on an "on-call" basis? We would attempt replication of experiments of interest to the agency. If the agency is interested, please advise me and I will go into detail regarding the design, control procedures that would be used, etc., of any experiments we might undertake.

Sincerely yours,



Leon S. Otis, Ph. D.
Director
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Enclosures